UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1998/392
14 May 1998
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

LETTER DATED 13 MAY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I wish to inform you of the following.

At 10.35 a.m. on 8 May 1998, three United States military helicopters hovered over the ship Chettinad Princed, registered in Pakistan, which was carrying a cargo of wheat to Iraq under the "oil-for-food" programme. The ship was in Khawr Abdullah near buoy No. 9 in Iraqi territorial waters and heading for the port of Umm Qasr. The ship's pilot was instructed by the crew of the helicopters to return to sea in order to undergo an inspection. However, the waters near buoy No. 9 are not conducive to such a manoeuvre, since the channel is narrow and there is a strong current. The pilot therefore informed the captain of the ship that turning the ship around might cause it to run aground. After the captain had communicated with the crew of the helicopters, they permitted the ship to enter Umm Qasr and the captain was informed that the inspection of the ship and its records would be conducted after it had discharged its cargo and returned to sea. The helicopters flew out to sea at 11.30 a.m.

I request you to intervene with the United States Government to induce it to end such unjustified and aggressive acts, which run counter to the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law and threaten the sovereignty and security of a State Member of the United Nations.

I also reaffirm Iraq's legally established right to seek compensation for the harm inflicted upon it by these provocative acts.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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